

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4586

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 9394

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP,TH

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI

1. I PAID MY INITIAL COURTESY CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN ON MAY 21. I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE DCM AND CHATCHAI BY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF INFORMATION PRACHA KUNAKASEM AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PROTOCOL WORACHIT NITIPHON. CHATCHAI WAS FRIENDLY AND FORTHCOMING, AS IS HIS NATURE. HE SAID THAT FINAL APPROVAL FROM THE PALACE HAS NOT YET BEEN OBTAINED, BUT INDICATIONS ARE THAT MY PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS WILL BE SCHEDULED MAY 30. CHATCHAI URGED THAT I CALL HIM ANY TIME THAT HIS HELP IS NEEDED AS THE DCM HAS DONE IN THE PAST. I SAID I WOULD MOST CERTAINLY DO SO AND PLEDGED MY FULL SUPPORT TO ADVANCING US-THAI RELATIONS. THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC SUBJECTS WERE DISCUSSED.

US MILITARY PRESENCE.

2. CHATCHAI REFERRED TO PRESS REPORTS THAT STUDENTS WERE DEMANDING THE TOTAL WITHDRAWAL OF THE US MILITARY PRESENCE BY JULY 4. HE SAID HE WILL TELL THE STUDENTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL STICK BY THE POLICY STATEMENT APPROVED ON MARCH 19, WHICH PROVIDES FOR WITHDRAWAL WITHIN ONE YEAR SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS IN THE AREA. HE SAID HE WOULD STRESS THAT THAILAND IS NOW A DEMOCRACY, THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST
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ABIDE BY PARLIAMENTARY DECISIONS AND THAT BASIC POLICIES

CANNOT SUDDENLY BE CHANGED BECAUSE OF STUDENT PRESSURES.
CHATCHAI SAID THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED WITH THIS POSITION.

3. I SAID THAT WE WERE FULLY PREPARED TO FOLLOW THE THAI GOVERNMENT'S WISHES REGARDING THE MILITARY PRESENCE BUT THAT WITHDRAWALS SHOULD BE HANDLED IN A GRADUAL AND ORDERLY MANNER. OTHERWISE, WE WOULD NOT ONLY HAVE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS BUT MIGHT WELL GIVE WRONG SIGNALS WITHIN THAILAND AND ELSEWHERE.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, CHATCHAI SAID THAT AS FAR AS THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONCERNED, THE RECENT DIFFICULTIES OVER THE INTRODUCTION OF US MARINES INTO THAILAND WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATION WERE FINISHED. SOME STUDENTS WERE STILL GRUMBLING THAT WE HAD USED THE WORD "REGRET" RATHER THAN "APOLOGIZE" IN OUR NOTE. THE DCM AND I POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS MERELY A MATTER OF SEMANTICS AND THAT OUR NOTE WAS AN APOLOGY. CHATCHAI AGREED.

5. CHATCHAI SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BRING AMBASSADOR ANAN BACK TO THAILAND FOR CONSULTATION BUT THAT THIS WAS NOT A RETALIATION FOR THE MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR. THE RTG WOULD ALSO PUSH AHEAD ON REVIEWING ALL US-THAI AGREEMENTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE REGARDING OUR MILITARY PRESENCE. CHATCHAI STRESSED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT DESIRED TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US BUT BELIEVED THESE RELATIONS SHOULD BE MORE "EQUITABLE." IN THE PAST IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR THE USG TO DEAL WITH ONE MAN WHO WAS PRIME MINISTER, DEFENSE MINISTER, SUPREME COMMANDER, AND, EVENTUALLY FOREIGN MINISTER. NOW, HOWEVER, WE HAD TO DEAL WITH A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT WHICH WAS RESPONSIBLE TO THE PARLIAMENT AND TO THE THAI PEOPLE. IT WAS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO CUT CORNERS AS IN THE PAST.

PRAMAN'S PROBLEMS.

6. CONTINUING THIS THEME, CHATCHAI SAID THESE WERE "DIFFICULT DAYS." AS ONE EXAMPLE, HE CITED THE CASE OF HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE PRAMAN ADIREKSAN WHO HAD GOTTEN INTO HOT WATER FOR DEFENDING CONFIDENTIAL

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THE US. AS A RESULT, STUDENTS HAD PLACED A BLACK WREATH IN FRONT OF HIS HOME. PRAMAN'S WIFE WAS UPSET AND IS NOW NAGGING AT HIM FOR GIVING UP A COMFORTABLE BUSINESS CAREER AND GOING INTO POLITICS.

RECOGNITION OF COMMUNIST CHINA.

7. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, CHATCHAI SAID THE PRC WAS

AGREEABLE TO A VISIT BY HIM AT ANY TIME, BUT THAILAND WAS NOT YET READY BECAUSE OF THE PROBLEM OF RESOLVING THE STATUS OF THE MORE THAN 300,000 CHINESE WITH ROC PASSPORTS. THESE PEOPLE MUST DECIDE WHETHER THEY WANT TO BECOME CITIZENS OF THAILAND OR MAINLAND CHINA. CHATCHAI SAID THE RTG WAS SPEEDING UP THE PROCESSING OF THIS CHINESE MINORITY AND WOULD DEFINITELY PLAN TO RECOGNIZE THE PRC BEFORE THE FORTHCOMING UNGA SESSION. PRACHA KUNAKASEM ADDED THAT ONE REASON FOR THAILAND'S RECOGNITION OF THE PRC WAS TO COUNTER "SATHORN ROAD" (SITE OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY). CHATCHAI ASKED WHETHER WE PLANNED TO RECOGNIZE THE PRC WITHIN THE NEAR FUTURE. I TOLD HIM THAT WE WOULD NOT AND THAT WE FOUND THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENT OPERATING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE PERFECTLY ADEQUATE.

LAOS.

8. A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN LAOS LEAD CHATCHAI TO OBSERVE THAT HE HAD FORMERLY BELIEVED THAT NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM CAME CLEARLY UNDER THE SOVIET SPHERE OF INFLUENCE WHILE LAOS AND CAMBODIA WOULD COME UNDER CHINESE HEGEMONY. HE HAS NOW HEARD, HOWEVER, THAT THE SOVIETS ALSO OCCUPY AN IMPORTANT POSITION IN LAOS. I NOTED THAT CHINESE INFLUENCE IS STRONG IN WESTERN LAOS, WHERE CHINESE ROAD BUILDING ACTIVITY IS CONTINUING, NORTH VIETNAM EXERCISES A STRONG ROLE IN EASTERN LAOS, WHILE THERE IS A LARGE AND HIGHLY ACTIVE SOVIET EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE.

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